

Reminiscences of Wisconsin in 1833¹

But few halt in the busy paths of today to look back over past years when Wisconsin lay sleeping in the cradle of Nature, as wild as when the broad river streams swept down the hillslopes and valleys to the sea; when the beech, the maple and the linden had assumed their places on the margin of the hill, the willow had begun to weep o'er the sparkling waters, and Nature smiled on the crowning work of creation which summoned man to the scenes of earthly life and labor.

But such was the condition of Wisconsin only a short time ago, and here is a scrap of Wisconsin history as old to the common reader as the musical tones of Homer are to the fossilized lover of classical lore.

In the year 1832 there were enlisted four companies of U. S. Rangers, for one year—two from Indiana, one from Illinois, and one from Missouri. On the 23d of July, I enlisted in the Illinois company, Capt. Jesse B. Brown commanding, and some time in August we set out for the front. In those days the front was not down in Dixie, but any where in what is now known as the Badger State, wherever Black Hawk & Co. happened to be. We had reached Hickory Creek, about thirty miles south of Chicago, when we met a messenger with word that Black Hawk had been defeated at the battle of Bad Axe, and we were ordered to Rock Island.

We passed by way of Dixon's Ferry, and the Dixon family included all the inhabitants of this point—a census-taker in those days could have done better working per diem than per capita. From Dixon's Ferry our route lay directly down Rock River for about eighty miles; and on the way down the soldiers began taking the cholera, and we had to leave some of them after erecting tents and leaving nurses. We went into camp four miles south of Rock Island, and for three

¹ From the *Madison Democrat*, July 1, 1871.